



The Magical Mystery Office Tour

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Do you give tours of your dental office? I was asked this question recently while taking a tour of A-dec's manufacturing facilities in Newberg, Oregon. I suspect your initial reaction was similar to mine: "Is that something that patients would want to do?" and "I don't have time for something like that." I am not advocating that you turn your office into a museum with guided tours, rather that you think about your office through the eyes of a patient taking a tour.

The A-dec tour left me with a very positive impression of their company for the following reasons: Every inch of each factory building was swept clean, the workstations were organized and every employee we passed along the way had a smile on their face. Notice the first things I mentioned about the tour had nothing to do with how they make the chairs? Our patients are no different. Since I'm a geek dentist, I had tremendous appreciation for the process of building a dental chair and delivery unit from the ground up. It is a fascinating orchestration of separate processes that come together in an exquisite way. The principals of Just-in-Time management are at work and nearly every job can be tracked to a specific order. The employees are clearly empowered and loyal – the younger employees have been there 10 years!

Another fine example is the Innovation Center at 3M headquarters in Minnesota. This building serves as a center for visitors from many different industries from all over the world. It is a showcase of the many technologies that 3M has available to create the products that we use every day inside and outside of our dental offices. The tour is more than just look and see – it is an education about their company, its history and the culture of innovation. If you went into engineering instead of dentistry, this could be a dream job. Once again, many of the employees I have encountered during my numerous visits have many years of service under their belts.

Let's turn this discussion back to our dental practices and ask a few essential questions:

- Would you be happy to give any patient a complete tour of your office at any time?
- Are there any locations within your office that you would not be proud to show due to a lack of organization or cleanliness?
- How many team members do you have that would make great tour guides?
- Would your tour guide be able to share the culture of your practice?
- Do you have a written mission statement? Are your team members familiar with this document?
- When your patient meets other team members along the way, would they be impressed by their attitude and commitment to the practice?
- Could you (the Dr.) demonstrate or describe the things you do behind the scenes to ensure that your patients receive the best care possible?
- Is there anything that you do in the practice you would not want a patient to see?

To be clear, I am not suggesting that your office must be filled with brand new equipment or that you must be as rich as a multi-billion dollar company. The self-examination that the answers to these questions will provide is a great way to find out if you are working in the practice of your dreams. Ask your team members to give each other a tour of the office with a critical eye. If you would like to really learn something about your office, ask three or four team members to each do a video tour of the office with their cell phone camera or one that you provide. Be sure they work separately as this will provide different perspectives. Their videos will provide new insights into the strengths and weaknesses of your practice. If you learn something new about your practice with this exercise, or if you have any comments to share, please send an e-mail to: tom@dentaltown.com. ■

